

Description:

Save the Lofty Trees is an environmental play suitable for young learners. In addition to the trees on which the story is based, the play incorporates the roles of animals and humans in the forest. The lesson plan integrates storytelling, movement, and role-playing, tapping into all learning styles. This lesson plan presents two ways to use the play:

1. as a scenario where the children imagine what the characters could say and the actions they could perform to illustrate their thoughts and feelings about the situation; or
2. as a scripted piece where the children might read the play line by line (or memorize the lines).

For each approach, the lesson begins the same: with a warm up, a guided imagination activity, brainstorming, and a creative movement activity. After completing these activities, the instructor can choose either the scenario approach or the scripted approach in working with *Save the Lofty Trees*.

Preliminary Lesson Planning

Materials

- a seed (apple seed if possible, or just a small piece of paper balled up to be the size of a seed)
- an apple (real or a picture) or a piece of fruit that grows in the area (coconut, banana, mango, cherry, avocado, etc.)
- picture sequence of an apple tree growing (on the blackboard or large sheets of paper, draw four stages: seed, sprout, sapling, grown tree with fruit on it)

Teacher preparation

Vocabulary—anticipate and prepare to teach or explain key words.

“How an Apple Tree Grows”—plan movements/gestures to correspond with text.

Save the Lofty Trees play and/or scenario set-up: read the script and mentally block out the space for the movement/arrangement needed when acting out the play/scenario.

Roles

Children (up to 5 roles), Factory Owner, Woodcutters, Conservationist, bees, birds, bunnies, squirrels, deer, and trees

Note: For very young learners (ages 5 to 8), use drills and games to help reinforce the language/lines for students. It is useful to use and encourage exaggerated gestures to go with the lines/story.

Warm up Activity: *How an Apple Tree Grows* (5–10 minutes)

Purpose

To set students’ schema for the lesson and focus them on the topic.

Procedure

1. Hold up or point to your picture sequence of “How an Apple Tree Grows” and elicit the process of an apple tree growing.
2. Lead students through the process season by season, emphasizing key vocabulary words. The list below may help.
 - seasons:** winter, spring, summer, fall/autumn
 - nouns:** ground, roots, branch(es), leaves, rain, sun, snow
 - verbs:** wake up, rest, grow, sleep, feel
 - adjectives:** small, strong, tall, dark, heavy, cold, warm, sunny, rainy, leafy
3. Elicit movements that could illustrate the growing process for an apple tree (e.g., students crunched down holding their knees with their heads down to simulate a seed in the ground; students still crunched but with their arms loosening and their heads up; students standing a little bent over; students standing straight up with arms out as branches). Encourage pupils to be creative in their movements. Join in and do the movements yourself.



Activity 1 • Guided Imagination: *How an Apple Tree Grows* (30–35 minutes)

Purpose

To help relax students into movement, to help set their schema, and to get them to role-play.

Procedure

1. Clear the room of chairs and desks, or instruct students to step away from their desks into the aisles.
2. Read the story *How an Apple Tree Grows*. Use the picture sequence as you tell the story, pointing to the appropriate parts of the image. Be sure to narrate this story slowly, and with appropriate pauses, gestures, and elicitation.
3. Encourage students to do the movements they practiced as appropriate to the various stages of the story.
4. After reading the story, remind students that trees are like people. They take a long time to grow up and they live for many years. They are an important part of the world. (Discuss how similar or different the growing process is for a fruit with which students are familiar.)

Transition from Activity 1 to Activity 2

Focus on the trees and their movement from *How an Apple Tree Grows*. Ask students if they liked being trees—notice the ones who expressed the most enthusiasm and invite them to play trees in the *Save the Lofty Trees* play/scenario.

Activity 2 • Brainstorming: *Why I Like Trees* (15–20 minutes)

Purpose

To get students to express why they like trees (or the benefits of trees).

How an Apple Tree Grows

an apple



and apple seeds

an apple seedling



an apple tree with



leaves and apples

an apple tree



resting...

You are a very small apple seed under the cold ground.
It is winter and you are sleeping.
Above you, snow covers the ground.
It is dark under the ground.

Now it is spring.

It is warm.

You start to wake up.

It rains in the spring time.

It feels good.

You are strong with the water and the warm earth.

You come above ground and feel the sun.

You are small, but you are happy to be outside.

The sun feels good.

You feel strong.

The rain feels good.

You grow slowly.

[pause to illustrate passage of time]

Now it is a few years in the future.

You are now a small tree, about the size of a young person.

You have beautiful green leaves.

There is more sun and rain.

You grow taller.

Soon you have apples on your branches.

You are a happy strong apple tree.

It is fall (autumn).

You have big apples on your branches.

Your branches feel heavy with so many apples.

You see some children.

The children pick your apples.

Your branches feel light.

Almost all of your apples are gone.

But you will grow more next year.

You thank the children.

You know they will enjoy the apples.

The children will eat the apples.

Some of the seeds from the apples might grow to be new apple trees.

[pause for change of season]

Now it is winter.

All of your leaves are gone.

But you know you will grow more leaves next spring and apples for the fall.

Now it is time to rest.

You rest.



The End



Procedure

1. Hold up the picture of the grown tree from the picture sequence. Ask students if they like trees. (Be sure they think of all trees and not just the apple tree in the picture). And then ask them *why* they like trees. Encourage them to list as many reasons as they can. Lead their answers into the benefits of trees. Discuss benefits to people, animals, and the environment.
2. Write responses on the board. Group the responses so they are classified under benefits for people, benefits for animals, and benefits for the environment. (See *Possible Answers* below.)

Option

Divide students into groups and encourage them talk about why they like trees for a few minutes. Open up for class discussion. Encourage students to give answers.

Possible Answers

Benefits to Animals

- Home for animals (birds, squirrels, raccoons, opossums, insects).
- Protection from enemies and bad weather.
- Provide food (fruits, nuts, leaves, bark, and roots).
- Even dead trees provide shelter and food for insects such as termites and beetles.

Benefits to Humans

- Houses made from wood from trees—inside and out! (furniture, floors, toys, musical instruments, kitchen utensils, boats, tools, etc.)
- Every part of a tree is used.
- Jobs for people—(foresters and nurserymen). All of the products made from trees create many more jobs.
 - Ground-up wood is used to make paper for tablets, newspapers, candy wrappers, and cereal boxes.
 - Sap, the liquid that flows in trees, is used in maple syrup, chewing gum, crayons, paint, and soap.
 - Bark is used to make dyes and medicines.
 - Flowers, leaves, and roots provide oils for cosmetics, medicines, and tea.
- Food (fruits like apples, pears, peaches and cherries; nuts like walnuts and hazelnuts)
- Shade to help keep people and homes cool.
- Beauty and public green areas (parks, campgrounds)
- Trees block the wind, making it easier to warm houses and other buildings.

Benefits to the Environment

Trees create better quality air, soil, and water.

- Air: Trees clean the air we breathe; they take in carbon dioxide through their leaves and give off the oxygen we need to breathe.
- Soil: Tree roots hold soil in place to prevent erosion, which not only saves

soil, but also helps keep our streams and lakes cleaner. Water is much cleaner when there are lots of trees around.

- Rain—Trees return moisture to the atmosphere: their roots take it from the soil and their leaves return it to the air.
- Shade created by trees helps protect the soil and the small organisms in it.
- Trees block the wind, which helps prevent soil from eroding.

Wrap up

Make a list, elicited from students, of items in the classroom that are made from trees. Remember to include non-wood products such as crayons, paper, and paint. Discuss the parts of the tree that the products may have come from or the different jobs that may have been required to produce the product. Have students copy the list and take it home to survey their home for the products on their list and other wood products. They could also make a list of some things in their home that are not made from wood, but could be.

Transition from Activity 2 to Activity 3

Ask students:

- What kind of trees and animals can be found in your environment?
- What types of animals and trees can be found in a forest?

When you discuss animals found in a forest, be sure to discuss the animals that appear in the play: squirrel, bird, bee, bunny (rabbit), and deer (or other suitable animals).

Activity 3 • Creative Movement: Animal Movements and Sounds

(15–20 minutes)

Purpose

To get students to move, to help ease the students into role-playing.

Procedure

1. Divide the students into five groups (one group for each animal: squirrel, bird, bee, bunny/rabbit, deer).
2. Instruct each group to come up with the animal sound and animal movement to represent its animal. Students should practice their sound and movement as a group.
3. Circulate to each group and see and hear the children's movements and sounds.
4. If students appear comfortable, have each group perform its animal movement/sound for the class.
5. Ask the trees to recreate their tree stance (with heavy apples and without).

Option

Ask groups to draw a picture of their animal and/or come up with a name for their animal, for example, "Sammy the Squirrel."

Transition from Activity 3 to Activity 4

Explain to students that they are going to hear a story and act out a play about trees in a forest.

- Elicit what roles might be in a play about trees in a forest.
- Encourage students to think about reasons they gave for why they like trees (Activity 2).
- Ask students what else or who else might be found in a forest (looking for the following humans: Woodcutters, Factory Owner, Conservationist). Clearly, it could be hard for students to come up with these exact characters, but see how they respond to the question.
- Pre-teach any vocabulary necessary at this point: e.g., *lofty*, *woodcutter*, *factory owner*, *conservationist*.
- Ask students what roles they would like to play. Reassure them that there are roles for everyone.

NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR

At this point you will choose to use either the scenario approach or to have your students use the script of the play that accompanies this article. Both approaches are outlined below, beginning with the scenario approach.

SCENARIO APPROACH

Activity 4 • *Save the Lofty Trees* Brainstorming and Interactive Read Through (40–50 minutes)

Purpose

To provide the students familiarity with the story of the play.

Procedure

1. Encourage predictions about the storyline of the play based on the title *Save the Lofty Trees*. Accept all ideas and encourage all students to participate.
2. Tell the story of *Save the Lofty Trees* as an interactive story, encouraging input and comments from the students. (See the teaching notes below.)

Activity 5 • *Save the Lofty Trees* Group Work (30–40 minutes)

Purpose

To provide the students practice with their part of the play.

Procedure

1. Assign all the roles in the play according to students' interest in them.
2. Instruct students to work in groups on their part, determining what they will say during the story as well as movement to go with their roles.

Suggested groupings:

- Children
- Factory owner, Woodcutters, Conservationist
- Bees, Birds, Bunnies, Squirrels, Deer

- Trees (Trees could be divided up amongst the groups to practice the interaction between trees and other characters.)
3. Move from group to group, assisting students as needed.

Activity 6 • *Save the Lofty Trees* Putting it Together—Practice Run (50–60 minutes)

Purpose

To perform the play and smooth out any problems with dialogue, movements, or timing.

Procedure

1. Keep students in their groups and tell the story of *Save the Lofty Trees*, using the notes below. Invite students to join in when it is their turn to say something or to gesture.
2. Stop groups and offer constructive criticism when necessary.
3. Encourage others to offer suggestions as well.

Activity 7 • *Save the Lofty Trees* Putting it Together—Refining (50–60 minutes)

Purpose

To perform the play using appropriate gestures, timing, and dialogue.

Procedure

Narrate the story and invite students to perform their roles with appropriate movements/dialogue. Students should be thinking about where they need to stand and move while acting out the story.

TEACHING NOTES FOR ACTIVITIES 4 AND 6 (FOR THE SCENARIO APPROACH)

Instead of having to memorize lines, students can perform the story as a scenario, devising their own lines (dialogue) and gestures or movements. To help students do that, tell one part of a story at a time, reading the numbered statements below. For each scene, ask students what the characters could say or do in that scene. Allow plenty of time for the students to express themselves, and give encouragement so that even more reserved students participate. Recap parts as necessary so students can participate repeatedly and learn the story. Once roles are determined, use appropriate gender when reading the statements in the scenario approach for the story.

1. This is a story about lofty trees. Big, tall, strong, trees in a forest with lots of leaves that provide nice, cool shade for the animals and the people who visit.
 - Ask students what kind of animals and people they would find. Encourage them to make movements like animals, the humans, and the trees. Encourage several of the students who were trees to stand up and be a forest of big, strong trees. During the actual scene the “trees” will need to remain standing until they are cut down. But for the first time you do the play, just identify the students and have them be trees as necessary for the scenes.

2. One day, a factory owner arrives. He wants the trees cut down to make money for his business.
 - Ask students what the factory owner might say, or what gestures (e.g., a pantomime of swinging an axe) he might make to indicate he wants to cut the trees. What might he say or do to show he wants to make money? (Elicit a culturally appropriate movement one might make to indicate money. In the United States it might be rubbing the forefingers and thumb together quickly.)
3. A Woodcutter is with the factory owner. He is happy to cut the trees because it's his job. He gets money by selling the wood from the trees.
 - Ask students what the Woodcutter might say, or what gestures he might make to indicate he wants to cut the trees because this is his job and how he makes money. You might encourage some of the same gestures as in number 2 above.
4. A Conservationist enters. She doesn't want the Woodcutter to cut the trees. She thinks the trees are very important for people, animals, and the environment.
 - What might the Conservationist say, or what gestures might she make to indicate she wants to save the trees? She doesn't want the Woodcutter to cut them. What can she say to them about why trees are good for people, animals, and the environment?
5. The Factory owner comes forward. He disagrees with the conservationist. He thinks the trees will give him a lot of money and make him more important. He thinks more trees should be cut. The owner signals to the Woodcutter to start cutting the trees.
 - What might the Factory owner say to the Conservationist and/or what gestures could go along with his disagreement? (The Woodcutter can make noise and pretend to cut down one of the trees. By the end of the scene, some of the trees should be on the ground.)
6. The animals are all sad. They want the Woodcutter to stop cutting the trees.
 - What can the animals say and do to help stop the Woodcutter? What about the squirrels? The birds? The bees? The bunnies? and the deer? (Encourage students to think of something for each animal grouping. They can think of something to say and some gestures to perform that they are sad to lose the trees.)
7. The Factory Owner steps up. He repeats how he also really likes the trees, but he likes them for money!
 - What did the Factory owner say and do before? What more can he say now to emphasize why he also likes the trees?
8. The Conservationist is sad about the Factory Owner's comments. She's happy that the animals talked to the factory owner about how important the trees are. She wants some others to express their support.
 - What can the Conservationist say to show how important the trees are to the world? What can she say to encourage support from each group of animals to stop the cutting of the trees?

9. Some supporters of the Conservationist enter. They have signs with messages about the goodness of the trees. They want to save the trees from being cut down.
 - Do you remember what the good things are about trees? (Encourage students as necessary: benefits to animals, humans, and the environment. There are many reasons; give students time to review these benefits.) What can the supporters' signs say? What can the supporters themselves say to show how much they want to save the trees?
10. The Factory Owner listens to the supporters. He still thinks the best benefit of the trees is the money and tells the Woodcutter to continue cutting the trees.
 - What can the Factory Owner say to the supporters and the Conservationist about why trees are important to him? Do you remember what is good about trees? How can the supporters emphasize their interest in saving the trees? (The Woodcutter continues cutting more trees. The rest of the trees are cut down.)
11. The Woodcutter cuts the last tree down. There is silence. No one knows what to say. The Factory Owner looks around for more trees. He starts to look worried and sad too.
 - What can the Factory Owner do to show he is looking for more trees? What can he say when he realizes there are no more trees? What can the animals do and say when they see the factory owner looking for more trees?
12. The animals and supporters are sad. They see all the trees are cut. No more trees are standing. The Factory Owner knows that no more trees means no benefits for anyone: the animals don't have food and shelter, there is no wood, no jobs for woodcutters or people who make things from trees. The Factory Owner cannot make more money. There will be less rain because the moisture in rain comes from trees. Also what water is left will be dirty.
 - What can the Factory Owner say to the supporters and the Conservationist to show he now understands the importance of trees to everyone?
13. A supporter holds out some seeds. The supporters, animals, Factory Owner and others look interested and curious.
 - What can the Supporter say to the others to comfort them and let them know that these seeds will some day be trees and all the benefits of the trees will return? What can the Factory Owner say to show that he now understands the importance of trees to humans and animals alike?
14. A supporter suggests planting trees to replace the ones that were cut down. She wants to convince the Factory Owner and everyone listening that planting new trees is the solution to the problem of not having any trees.
 - What can the supporter say about re-planting the trees? How long will it

take for the trees to grow? What kind of benefits will come from the forest? for the people? the animals? the environment? What can the Factory Owner say or do to show the supporters and the Conservationist that he has a new understanding of the importance of trees to the environment, to animals, and to people?

SCRIPTED APPROACH

Activity 4 • *Save the Lofty Trees* Brainstorming and Interactive Read Through (40–50 minutes)

Purpose

To provide the students practice and familiarity with their part of the play.

Procedure

1. Encourage predictions about the storyline of the play based on the title *Save the Lofty Trees*. Accept all ideas and encourage all students to participate.
2. Assign all the roles in the play to the students.
3. Photocopy the play from this issue of *Forum* and distribute it. Have students find their parts on the photocopy and circle or highlight where they are to speak. Review any vocabulary that was pre-taught.
4. Tell students that you are going to read through the play for them and that they should listen along.
5. Instruct students to stand up when their part is read aloud.
6. Read through the play once or twice with them, making sure the right students stand for the roles.
7. Go over or emphasize any vocabulary.

Activity 5 • *Save the Lofty Trees* Group Work (30–40 minutes)

Purpose

To provide the students practice with their part of the play.

Procedure

Instruct students to work in groups on their part, practicing pronunciation, intonation, stress of their lines as well as gestures and movements to go with their roles. Move from group to group, assisting groups as needed.

Suggested groupings:

- Children (prepare to teach the tune “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as indicated in the play)
- Factory owner, Woodcutters, Conservationist
- Bees, Birds, Bunnies, Squirrels, Deer
- Trees (Trees could be divided up amongst the groups to practice the interaction between trees and other characters.)

Activity 6 • Save the Lofty Trees Putting it Together—Practice Run
(50–60 minutes)

Purpose

To perform the play and smooth out any problems with pronunciation, intonation, movement, timing.

Procedure

1. Keep students in their groups and have a read-through of the the play with each group performing its part in sequence.
2. Stop groups as necessary to offer constructive suggestions.
3. Encourage others to offer suggestions as well.

Activity 7 • Save the Lofty Trees Putting it Together—Refining
(50–60 minutes)

Purpose

To perform the play using appropriate intonation, stress, and movements.

Procedure

Have students perform the play using all movements and going where instructed in the available performing space.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES (FOR EITHER APPROACH)

- Students make their own props/costumes for the play (consider making it a cross-curricular activity involving the art class).
- Students draw pictures to illustrate the play.
- Students draw a picture or make a poster, illustrating one or more ways in which trees benefit the environment or humans.
- Students write a poem about trees.
- If the play is to be performed, students could make a poster to advertise the play.
- Students could perform the play more than once, switching roles.

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